

I'm not sure when this really starts. It might be...

It's a cool spring day. Gloomy and overcast. It is 1979 and I'm four. I don't have a full memory of the day...just a snapshot. My dad is climbing into his car, a dark brown Chevette. He has a full beard and is wearing dark glasses. I see him wave, but he doesn't smile. My head begins to turn a bit to the left and I see my mom. She's standing in the doorway to our home, masked by the screen door. She's so young, hardly an adult, and she's crying. I see her lips move and I start to walk toward her. There is no sound on this reel. Only five seconds of film. I remember I was wearing a hood and it was tied tightly at my chin. I think it was blue. I can smell rain. And with that, the clip is over. I don't remember anything else about the day, but that might be where it started.

If the story started somewhere else...

I'm standing in the doorway to my bedroom. It's in the basement of our home. All the lights are off except for one single bulb over the washer and dryer. It is 1990 and I'm fifteen. My mother and father are hugging. My father is crying. His body shakes between his sobs. I see my mother's thin arms holding him tightly. She's squeezing him. Tears stream down her face but she doesn't make a sound. She begins to rock him slowly side-to-side. I stand in my doorway rocking with them. I rock and sway in time with my parents. I smell fabric softener. I am numb. Today they received the answer, but before they share it with me, the clip ends.

Although I don't know where the story starts, I know which chapter we're in today. It begins with the main character, my father, dying slowly. In the middle, there are glimpses of my mother, old before her time, carrying baggage that's much too heavy for her. At the end, that's me, and I still can't figure out what it all means.

My dad left my mother for another man. Perhaps not exactly the point I want to make right now, but seems to belong in this place. Let's fast forward a bit...we can come back to this later if we need to...

My dad is dying of AIDS. I feel the hood tied tightly at my chin. And I rock and sway in time with my parents. I smell fabric softener, scented like rain. And some days, I beg to be numb again.